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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRATISLAVA 001050

SIPDIS

FOR EUR/ERA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/18/2014

TAGS: [PREL](#) [LO](#) [EUN](#)

SUBJECT: SLOVAK THOUGHTS ON UPCOMING GAERC MEETING

REF: A. STATE 244333

[1](#)B. STATE 247288

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald Weiser for reason 1.4 (d).

[1](#)1. (SBU) DCM hosted lunch 11/15 for the MFA's "CFSP" team: Acting Director of the Division for European Affairs Frantisek Ruzicka, COREPER Director Anna Turinicova, and European Correspondent Lubomir Rehak. They discussed the latest thinking on the China arms embargo, Turkish accession, and Cuba, among other issues. On 11/16, poloff demarched Rehak on the GAERC agenda items described in reftel.

[1](#)2. (C) MEPP: Rehak agreed that Arafat's death presents new opportunities to reinvigorate the Middle East Peace Process. When told we hope EU governments will consider generous contributions to the IFC PEP-MENA Facility, he said, "I think they will."

[1](#)3. (C) China: Ruzicka expressed the opinion that we will get through the EU-China summit with the arms embargo intact. Many countries, Slovakia included, have expressed serious reservations about the still-undefined "toolbox" to strengthen the code of conduct. However, momentum to lift the embargo is strong within the EU. We will continue demarching top Slovak officials per ref B.

[1](#)4. (C) Kosovo: Rehak agreed that local government/decentralization was crucial, but the question is whether to allow "ethnic municipalities." Slovakia thinks it would be appropriate to form such municipalities and to allow Serbs to govern themselves, noting however that every nationality represented in any municipality must have the same rights. He said Slovakia believes the EU must cooperate more closely with the U.S. on Kosovo, since the U.S. influence is very strong with the Albanians. He praised the U.S. position on Macedonia as a "diplomatic and clever step of the U.S." and an example of why the EU should consult more with the U.S. on such issues. Rehak added that it would be appropriate for the ICTY to try any indicted Albanians, because up to now only Serbs have been tried.

[1](#)5. (C) Belarus: Rehak agreed it would be most effective for the US and EU to coordinate possible negative actions against individuals in the Belarussian leadership, particularly the issue of whether to add Lukashenko to the list of those to be sanctioned. Slovakia wants to intensify dialog with mid-level officials in government structures, many of whom will likely remain in government even when Lukashenko is gone. Slovakia wants to avoid inflaming relations, which could result in even greater isolation of the citizens of Belarus. For example, the Slovak MFA is providing a grant to a Slovak NGO working in Belarus to strengthen civil society and to get information out to the regions of Belarus. A Slovak journalist misquoted an MFA official as characterizing this program's aim to "democratize" Belarus. That misquote resulted in a demarche from the Belarussian ambassador in Bratislava, as well as the Slovak charge d'affaires being called into the MFA in Minsk for scolding. In order to ensure that this important people-to-people program can continue, and that the Slovaks are not expelled from Belarus or prevented from traveling in the future, the MFA must tread carefully around the Belarussian government.

[1](#)6. (C) Cyprus Aid and Trade: Rehak said Cypriot efforts to block the aid and trade package for Turkish Cypriots would "probably only be resolved December 17."

[1](#)7. (C) Turkey: Foreign Minister Kukan visited Ankara November 10-11, and then cut the official part of the visit short to fly with the Turkish PM to Yasser Arafat's funeral. The MFA has drafted a position paper favoring the start of Turkish accession talks, though it is intentionally vague on setting the exact date and conditions under which to begin the talks, in order to give PM Dzurinda the mandate and the flexibility to adopt the common EU position on December 17. Furthermore, it does not guarantee Turkish membership in the EU. MFA officials are briefing Parliament November 19 about Kukan's visit to Turkey and the MFA position paper. The paper has been submitted to the inter-ministerial process; the cabinet will discuss it November 24; it will go to Parliament for discussion by the EU Committee on November 29; and then will

go to a plenary session of Parliament for approval.

18. (C) Rehak told poloff 11/19 that the Austrian FM had dinner with Kukan "a couple days ago" and that they discussed Turkey. However, there was "no special request" from Austria regarding Slovakia's position on the issue. He also said that the MFA was watching the policies of other member states unfold, but that the Austrian opinion did not influence the Slovak position.

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